# Gasworks on Ship Street in Folkestone bought by council

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Plans to spend more than half a million pounds buying derelict land - described as a blot on **Folkestone** - have been given the go ahead.

Folkestone and Hythe District Council's cabinet agreed to purchase the former gasworks site in Ship Street at their meeting last Wednesday.

The council will buy the site

It now plans to build 85 new homes on the land, which has lain empty since the gasworks was demolished in the 1960s.

The authority will pay a total of £630,000 to buy it from current owners National Grid and SGN.

This sum includes buying the land for £400,000 and then pre-development costs of £230,000.

Cllr David Monk (Con) said the acquisition was 'not so much about place making' but 'place saving'.

He said: "This is a site that has laid dormant for nearly half a century.

Cllr David Monk (18850872)

"It is a blot on the landscape in the middle of east Folkestone.

"It is a site with tremendous potential being where it is, just a few minutes walk from the town centre, seafront and the railway station.

"I think it is a very sensible thing to do, to purchase this land and go forward and come up with much needed housing especially in that particular area."

Cllr David Godfrey (Con) agreed, adding: "It is a prime site and I think if it is dealt with properly, as it will be, it will really help the place making of east Folkestone.

"We are well aware that this is not without some risks but those risks are well analysed.

> **"It is a blot on the landscape in the middle of east Folkestone..."**

"We're not expecting huge profits out of this - it's making sure that derelict sites gets put to good use and really is a huge benefit to the town."

The Folkestone Gas Company was founded by Ralph Thomas Brockman in 1842. In the same year the gasworks was built on the seafront, where Marine Crescent sits today.

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It moved to the bigger site off Ship Street in 1888 and went through many changes over the years.

It was demolished in the 1960s.

The empty land was used in the 2014 Triennial for an art space.

Cllr David Godfrey

Speaking at the meeting, Cllr John Collier (Con) complimented the officer, Andy Jarrett, for 'striking a good deal', saying that the market value for the site was £500,000 and said Mr Jarrett negotiated £100,000 off that.

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More detailed plans for the site are now expected to be worked on, with Cllr Monk adding that the council will work will Creative Folkestone to bring art and culture into the scheme.

He added that neighbours will also be consulted on the development.

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